Samuel Charlesworth

"The mighty dead
"Who blessed mankind and humanised the world."

THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN
AND
Record of Unitarian Worthies

BEING A HISTORY OF THE UNITARIAN REFORMATION OF RELIGION IN EUROPE AND AMERICA DURING THE LAST THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.

With some Account of the most Notable Works written by Unitarians.

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FOLDED HANDS.

In Nuremberg, about the year 1486, lived Albrecht Durer and Franz Knigstein. Both were near of an age, and both were about to enter the studio of Michael Wohlgemuth, a famous artist of that day. But with a difference: Jacob Knigstein, worthy builder and craftsman that he was, had one supreme longing, namely, to see his son an artist; so Franz's hands were made strong by home-love and sympathy, while Albrecht had won but a grudging consent from the old goldsmith father, who would fain have seen his craft handed down as an heirloom, from generation to generation. However, consent had been given. As for sympathy, one could work without it, as Durer found in later years, at even greater cost, when he married Hans Fritz's daughter.

The boys were Michael Wohlgemuth's steady, patient students through the appointed years of service; but the wandering years that Albrecht gave to Germany, Franz decided to pass in sunny Italy. Their master gave an expressive shrug as Franz left him after good-by words. "Franz is a good lad, Durer," he said to the old goldsmith. "But a painter—never! Albrecht, now—that is another matter."

The goldsmith grunted, not yet fully reconciled to his son's choice; but pleased at Wohlgemuth's rare praise.

"Albrecht does well enough; but has not Franz the prize for perspective?"

"Yes," said the old painter, smiling. By Albrecht's grace, albeit Franz knows it not. Albrecht did not choose to take it from him; that is all. If Franz sketches a cat, he must needs dissect it first, to be sure about the muscles; then he looks after each particular hair in puss's tail; and yet, it is but a dead cat, after all. Whereas, five strokes from Albrecht makes Katschen herself, back up, ready to spring! And poor Franz keeps labouring on with might and main, over what the other does with a turn of his little finger! And yet, with the good father, who thinks the sun rises over Franz's right shoulder and sets over the left, and that pretty Gretchen, for whom he has set the world on fire already, and his own earnest belief in his vocation, the lad must some day do something."

Nuremberg heard from time to time of the art-students' journeyings. When the three years were ended, Franz came back to his proud father and the sweetheart who had patiently bided her time of waiting, and they were wedded,

As for Albrecht, you know how his travels ended, he came home, married a shrew, and lived, laboured and died in Nuremberg. Perhaps the man's suffering was the artist's gain; and if Hans Fritz's daughter cared nothing for that noble heart, it was all the freer for Art's unchallenged holding. But the contrast between the two friends' handiwork grew more marked as time went on. No matter how strange or far-fetched any fancy of Durer's, some heart rang to its touch; no matter how careful, how elaborate—aye how loftily and deeply spiritual, Franz's picture, it hung unsought and unregarded in his studio, till the disgusted artist put it out of sight. Gretchen still believed in her husband. Old Knigstein was dead, and Franz had not now full leisure to give to painting; for, finding his art unprofitable, so far as money was concerned, he had taken up his father's old trade of house-building. *Here*, the Nurembergers sang his praises, nothing loth, and work poured in upon him, for the new houses were better than old Knigstein's; but no matter what the pressure, Franz still held firmly to his rule—so many days in the week a builder, so many days an artist.

This Outside Cover to be taken Off by the Binder of the "Record."

In one of the many talks between the two friends, they found that both had been planning a series of etchings on the same subject—the Passion of our Lord. It was Franz who proposed that neither should hear the other's conception or see his fellow's work in progess, until both had done, then they would compare results. And to these sincere, simple-hearted men, it was only natural to kneel and ask a blessing on the work of their hands before they parted.

I cannot tell you how much time the etchings took, but it was long enough to make Franz's face sharpen in a way that made his serener comrade think of Dante, whose cheeks the great poem made lean through so many years. To Albrecht, the work ever brought peace and calm; it was well for him that it did!

At last, both had finished; and Albrecht, brought his work to Franz's room. In silence they laid out corresponding sketches, one by one, then stood regarding the well-covered table. Truly, the great subject, had but shown Franz's lack of fitness for it. His etchings showed, beside Durer's like a set of mocking, godless caricatures; and with one move of his arm, he swept them to the floor.

"Lie there," he said, bitterly. "Dost think that I would dishonour my God by such as ye are?"

He sat down, with his face between his hands. Ah, children, failures are hard at fifteen, but they are crushing at forty-five! Durer sat watching him, in great distress, yet not daring to say a word of comfort.

There was a long silence, with one or two tearless, heart-wringing sobs to break it; then Franz said, "To-morrow, Albrecht, you shall know all my heart; but now"

"You are best alone," returned his friend, gathering up his own studies, and heartily glad to be gone.

True to his word, Franz came in the morning. "Let me see your etchings again," Franz asked, after the morning greetings.

Albrecht silently laid them before him. He looked at them, one by one; then he said:

"The good Lord bless them to others as He has to me; I can give them no better Godspeed, Albrecht. For they have shown me how utterly useless my strivings have been; how truly my work has been dead work. I may be fit to build houses for our good Nuremberg folk, I must let Art be."

He got up, and stood looking out of the window for a moment, then came back to the table where Durer sat, still speechless, and nervously working with his pencil.

"Here," said Franz, folding his hands, "I give it all up. The good Lord gave me not an artist's hands, so He never meant them to do artist's work; but may He bless, day by day, the homely labour He has given me to do!"

He stood leaning against the table. As Albrecht dared at last to look up into his friend's face, the folded hands caught his eye.

"Franz, be quiet one moment!" he exclaimed. "Don't stir!"

Weary with his long struggle, Franz cared not to ask the why or the wherefore of his friend's abrupt command, but stood passive until he was released.

"That will do now," said Durer. "Franz, old comrade, I can say nothing, but that you are nobly right."

A few days later, Franz was again with Albrecht, and a sketch of two folded hands was the latest addition to the treasures of the studio.

"Dost know them?" asked the artist.

Franz looked closer.

"I should, they are my very own. Was that what thou wast doing the other morning?"

Albrecht nodded.

"I have great faith in those hands. But the spirit that is in them is thine, not mine; I did but set it forth. Thou shalt see whether they go not to men's hearts!"

Franz shook his head in doubt.

"Were not the sketch the better of an inscription? say a scroll coming from between the hands, '*Fiat voluntas tua.*'"

The artist smiled his own sweet far-sighted smile.

"Nay, Franz, he said. "Where the spirit of Holy Writ is so plain, there needs not the graven letter. I may err; but I think, in resigning art, thou hast done at last true artist's work!"

It proved so, indeed, for Durer made many copies of the sketch before men ceased to call for them. How much comfort Franz Knigstein, master-builder in Nuremberg, had from this picture, the chronicles of the quaint old city do not tell; but the tradition is, that wherever Franz Knigstein's Folded Hands go, they bring a blessing with them; for the artist's skill has stayed the spirit of the living creature that was in them—of humble owning that work is to be done where and when and as God pleases; and where that spirit is, the work of the hands cannot but prosper, whether, to our eyes, it fail or it succeed.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S DREAM, AS TOLD BY DICKENS.

I DINED with Charles Sumner, last Sunday, against my rule; and, as I had stipulated for no party, Mr. Secretary Stanton was the only other guest besides his own secretary. Stanton is a man with a very remarkable memory, and extraordinarily familiar with my books. He and Sumner having been the first two public men at the dying President's bedside, and having remained with him until he breathed his last, we fell into a very interesting conversation after dinner, when, each of them giving his own narrative separately, the usual discrepancies about details of time were observable. Then Mr. Stanton told me a curious little story, which will form the remainder of this short letter. On the afternoon of the day on which the President was shot, there was a Cabinet council, at which he presided. Mr. Stanton, being at the time commander-in-chief of the Northern troops that were concentrated about here, arrived rather late, indeed, they were waiting for him, and, on his entering the room, the President broke off in something he was saying, and remarked: "Let us proceed to business, gentlemen." Mr. Stanton then noticed, with great surprise, that the President sat with an air of dignity in his chair, instead of rolling about in the most ungainly attitudes, as his invariable custom was, and that instead of telling irrelevant or questionable stories, he was grave and calm, and quite a different man. Mr. Stanton, on leaving the council with the Attorney-General, said to him: "That is the most satisfactory Cabinet meeting I have attended for many a long day. What an extraordinary change in Mr. Lincoln?" The Attorney-General replied, "We all saw that before you came in. While we were waiting for you, he said, with his chin down on his breast, 'Gentlemen, something very extraordinary is going to happen, and that very soon.'" To which the Attorney-General had observed, "Something good, sir, I hope." When the President answered very gravely, "I don't know, I don't know; but it will happen, and shortly, too." As they were all impressed by his manner, the Attorney-General took him up again, "Have you received any information, sir, not yet disclosed to us?" "No," answered the President; but I have had a dream, and I have now had the same dream three times—once on the night preceding the battle of Bull's Run; once on the night preceding such another" (naming a battle also not favourable to the North). His chin sunk on his breast again, and he sat reflecting. "Might one ask the nature of this dream, sir?" said the Attorney-General. "Well," replied the President, without lifting his head or changing his attitude, "I am on a great, broad, rolling river, and I am in a boat—and I drift and I drift—but this is not business," suddenly raising his face and looking round the table as Mr. Stanton entered, "Let us proceed to business, gentlemen." Mr. Stanton and the Attorney-General said, as they walked on together, it would be curious to notice whether anything ensued on this; and they agreed to notice. He was shot that night.
—*Forster's "Life of Dickens."*

LIFE OR DEATH.

DOTH Life survive the touch of Death?
Death's hand alone the secret holds,
Which as to each one he unfolds,
We press to know with bated breath.

A whisper there, a whisper here,
Confirms the hope to which we cling;
But still we grasp at anything,
And sometimes hope and sometimes fear.

Some whisper that the dead we knew
Hover around us while we pray,
Anxious to speak. We cannot say:
We only wish it may be true.

I know a stoic who has thought,
"As healthy blood flows through his veins,
And joy his present life sustains,
And all this good has come unsought,

"For more he cannot rightly pray;
Life may extend, or life may cease;
He bides the issue, sure of peace,
Sure of the best in God's own way.

"Perfection waits the race of man;
If, working out this great design,
God cuts us off, we must resign
To be the refuse of His plan."

But I, for one, feel no such peace;
I dare to think I have in me
That which had better never be,
If lost before it can increase.

And oh! the ruined piles of mind,
Daily discovered everywhere.
Built but to crumble in despair?—
I dare not think Him so unkind.

The rudest workman would not fling
The fragments of his work away,
If ev'ry useless bit of clay
He trod on were a sentient thing.

And does the Wisest Worker take
Quick human hearts, instead of stone,
And hew and carve them one by one,
Nor heed the pangs with which they break?

And more: if but Creation's waste,
Would He have given us sense to yearn
For the perfection none can earn
And hope the fuller life to taste?

I think, if we must cease to be,
It is a cruelty refined,
To make the instincts of our mind
Stretch out towards eternity.

Wherefore I welcome nature's cry,
As earnest of a life again,
Where thought shall never be in vain,
And doubt before the light shall fly.
—*Macmillan's Magazine.*

WAYSIDE GATHERINGS.

—o—

KEEPING PROMISE WITH A CHILD.—When Charles James Fox was a boy, his father promised him that he should see a condemned wall demolished. But it chanced to be thrown down when he was absent. To keep his faith with the child, the father had the wall rebuilt, and Charlie was present at the second demolition.

DIVINE SUNSHINE.—There is no more beautiful passage in Tyndall than the one in which he says "all the forces now working in nature are solar ones. The subtle power of steam and the immense coal deposits are only condensed and preserved sunshine." So divine influence, all through the centuries, is stored up in institutions. How sweet and bland this sunshine! We look up and the whole globe above us seems a vast goblet of sunlit wine. As it falls on the blending, yielding willow, its influence seems only gentle and harmless. But let it fall on the living tree growing by the wall, and it will cause the tree to force the harvest stone or brick wall out of its way. So the soul grows and Christian character is developed under the divine sun.

JOHN STUART MILL AND MRS. CARLYLE.—A writer says: "It is well-known that when the first volume of Carlyle's unpublished 'History of the French Revolution' was in Mr. Mill's care, 'a servant in Mrs. Taylor's house' used the manuscript to light the fires. Mill called to communicate the loss, and while he was sobbing like a child, Mrs. Carlyle came down into her husband's study. Seeing that something terrible had happened, and knowing nothing worse than for a woman to forsake her family, she ran out to the gate where Mrs. Taylor was sitting in the carriage, and said to her, 'I do hope, my dear, you have not left your husband.' True-hearted Mrs. Carlyle! She may not have been 'intellectual' or 'artistic,' for she said, "Thomas, I do wish you would write so that people could understand you,' but her unsophisticated soul was loyal and straightforward, and her gifted husband was satisfied with her devoted love, never deserting her to associate with some more philosophical and poetical woman."

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND CRIME.—From a return which has just been issued, giving the religious denominations of the prisoners in the gaols of England, we learn that in the four county prisons in Lancashire, and in the prisons of Manchester and Liverpool, the adherents of the Church of England numbered 16,093, the Roman Catholics 17,799, and Dissenters of all classes, including Jews and Lutherans, 999. Thus out of our Lancashire prisoners 51 per cent. are Roman Catholics, 46 per cent. Church of England, and 3 per cent. Dissenters. In Liverpool borough prison the first-named are as two to one, and considering the relative proportions of the members of this Church to the population, it must be a very serious cause for reflection to its pious members that this communion alone should include the larger moiety of the criminal population. But what is to be said of the Church of England with its vast revenues, and which receives a large sum yearly from the taxes for the education, warranted religious, of 80 per cent. of the children of the nation, as Church defenders continually boast? 46 per cent. of the crime is a percentage about which there can be no mistake and no juggling; and if the Church claims these as her children, or they acknowledge her as their mother, she ought to give a better account of them.—*Ashton News*, June 14, 1873.

AN OVERTURE TO UNITARIANS.—A Rev. Dr. Hill is reported as having recently said in one of his sermons, that "The Trinitarian denominations were very rapidly changing their old attitude, placing less stress upon doctrinal tests, and more upon the evidences of a new spirit." "Let the Unitarians meet these concessions of modern orthodoxy by ceasing to make denial and negation more prominent in their theology than positive affirmations."

INTEREST IN THE HEATHEN.—A little boy was playing with a couple of pieces of money which a friend had given him, and putting his finger on one of them, he said, "This one I am going to give to the heathen;" and on the other and said, "and this one I am going to buy candy with." He kept on playing, till at last one of the pieces rolled away, and he could not find it. "Which one have you lost?" "The one I was going to give to the heathen," replied the cherub.

BIGOTRY.—What a curious history will be written some day of bigotry. The following item we hope will not be omitted:—"The Universalist Church in Hyannis was struck by lightning some years ago. The nearest bell was on the Baptist Church. But when an application was made for the key to the sexton, who was also the deacon, he flatly refused, saying he was not a going to interfere with the will of the Almighty, and keep that church from burning, and so the house was consumed."

TO SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS.—At a teachers' meeting Professor Allen said that he "had never seen much Christianity grow out of set Scriptural lessons. All the Christianity that is taught grows out of the Christian character of the teacher. The teacher who expects to teach words in school must be a Christian herself. He would give more for a good Christian teacher without a Bible than for ordinary teachers with five hundred Bibles."

A MOST INSTRUCTIVE LESSON.—The *Tablet* says of an Irishman's faith:—"The world knows right well that whatever it may do with Catholics of other nationalities, there is no tampering with the faith of an Irishman; no diluting it into 'liberalism,' no theorising it out of his strong warm heart, or substituting for it any new-fangled speculative religion, however accommodating to flesh and blood. Wherever the Irishman is known—and where is he not known?—he is the authorised foe to modern 'isms.' Be his faults what they may—and heaven knows that he has them in plenty—faith is at the bottom of all, the wonder-working faith that brings him often to a happy, penitent death after a life of misery and of sin." A more truthful and lamentable description we never read of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. The creed firmly believed and adhered to is not the faith that works by love and purifies the heart. It enables him to die a penitent after a miserable and sinful life.

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